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GROUP COUNSELING-PLUS--INCREASING SCHOOL SUCCESS OF JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS.

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TO TEST THE HYPOTHESIS THAT STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC PROBATION WHO RECEIVED SUPPORT AND INSIGHT FROM A GROUP WOULD OBTAIN HIGHER GRADE POINT AVERAGES THAN THOSE WITHOUT SUCH AN EXPERIENCE, THE RECORDS OF AN EXPERIMENTAL GROUP OF 30 PROBATIONARY STUDENTS WERE MATCHED ON THE BASIS OF AGE, SEX, AND NUMBER OF UNITS TAKEN, MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS, ACADEMIC OR VOCATIONAL PROGRAM, AND ENTRANCE TEST SCORES. IN 10 UNSTRUCTURED GROUP SESSIONS, EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS DISCUSSED PRESENT STUDY PROBLEMS, SCHOOL EXPERIENCES, AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AND INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING WERE ALSO PROVIDED. OF THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP, 56 PERCENT EARNED A 2.0 OR HIGHER GPA AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER, AS COMPARED WITH 26 PERCENT OF THE CONTROL GROUP. IN 76 PERCENT OF THE CASES, INDIVIDUALS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP RECEIVED HIGHER GRADES THAN THEIR CONTROL GROUP COUNTERPARTS. THREE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP MEMBERS AND NO CONTROLS EARNED A 3.0 GPA. STUDENTS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP WERE ALSO OBSERVED TO IMPROVE IN APPEARANCE AND DRESS, BEGIN JOINING CLUBS, INCREASE DATING, AND OBTAIN PART-TIME WORK. IN SOME CASES, PARENTS INFORMED THE COLLEGE OF IMPROVED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS. TWO SOURCES OF POSSIBLE BIAS ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GROUPS WITH RESPECT TO EDUCATION OF THEIR FATHERS AND THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP'S LARGER NUMBER OF STUDENTS RETURNING TO COLLEGE AFTER AN ABSENCE. (WO)

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GROUP COUNSELING - PLUS: INCREASING SCHOOL SUCCESS OF JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Most of the counseling departments of junior colleges in Southern California are primarily concerned with direct academic guidance of students into classes. Much less attention is given to students who need to understand and ideally to change their attitudes and self-concept as related to their studies. In the Fall of 1962, Glendale Junior College began a program of personal counseling as a means of increasing scholastic efficiency of unsuccessful students. One phase of the program was Group Counseling Plus.

Purpose

This study sought to determine whether unsuccessful students could improve their school work through an enriched group counseling program. As a comparison, the records of unsuccessful students who attended the college before personal counseling facilities were available were examined.

It was hypothesized that students on academic probation who received support and insight from a group would obtain higher grade point averages than those who did not have such an experience. Since the literature suggests that one hour per week group sessions by themselves would be inadequate to raise the grade point averages of probation students in one semester, a PLUS was added to the program in the form of academic advisements, individual counseling and parental contact if and when necessary.

The counselor had access to the students' attendance records, illness patterns and academic progress throughout the semester. All students, either through choice or as a result of the organization of the counseling department, had some contact with the counselor outside of the group sessions.

Method

Subjects

The experimental subjects consisted of thirty (30) junior college students on scholastic probation. Each was matched with a student on probation before a counseling program was available. Each group was composed of eighteen (18) males and twelve (12) females. The experimental students entered college with a mean age of 18.2 years and acquired probation grades the beginning of the semester they were 18.4 (mean years of age). The control students were almost identical in age at entry and age when placed on probation.
(See Table I)
One female counselor worked with all groups.

Although 48 students have been in group counseling to increase their g.p.a., this study will limit itself to those students who were on scholastic probation.

Procedure

The before and after grade point averages of thirty (30) students on probation who took part in Group Counseling Plus were compared with a matched control group of thirty (30) students who were on probation, but not in any counseling program. Of the members of the experimental group, nineteen (19) had been assigned to the counselor for academic advisement. The remainder had been referred by other counselors and faculty members. All members in the experimental group attended at least four of the ten one-hour group sessions, ended the semester with the group and appeared to consider himself part of the group. Each group had a maximum of ten members. The control subjects were obtained by randomly examining the probation files. The two groups were individually matched on the basis of sex, age, and semester units. (Ten was the minimum units accepted for the semester the student went on probation.) The most

important match was the total score on the American Council on Education Psychological Exam (Entrance Test). A ten centile range within increasing tenths was arbitrarily selected, (i.e. 10-20, 20-30, 30-40, etc.).

The groups were also compared on the basis of marital status of parents. Prior to their entrance in college, there existed five divorced families and two families with a parent deceased among the experimental group. The control group contained six divorced families.

Since Glendale is a junior college, the matching also took into consideration course selection: academic or vocational. Almost without exception, the courses were academic.

Orientation of Group Leader

The group leader took a developmental approach to the problem emphasizing the role of unconscious motivation.

Experimental Situation

In unstructured group sessions students discussed present study problems, early school experiences, family relationships, and past and present interpersonal relationships. An attempt was made to organize and give meaning to the student's entire life--dating, studying, attitudes towards professors, etc. Most of the time feelings remained on an everyday conversation level, but tears and controlled anger did occur.

Results

The results of this study were evaluated in two ways: an absolute measure of grade point averages, and an observational measure of behavioral changes.

A comparison of the grade point averages obtained the semester after being placed on academic probation revealed that seventeen (17) or 56% of the students in group counseling obtained a 2.0 or better grade average, and eight (8) or 26% of the control group obtained a 2.0 or better average. ($x^2 = <.05$)

A further comparison was made of the "after" g.p.a. of each individual in the experimental group with each individual in the control group. The experimental group obtained the higher grade point averages, even if not at the C level in 76% of the cases. (Sign test = <.01)

Also, three members of the experimental group obtained a 3.0 average while none of the controls did.

Students in group counseling evidenced definite changes in other areas besides grade point averages. They improved their appearance and dress, began joining clubs, increased dating, and found part-time jobs. Improvement of family relationships were obvious enough for parents to inform the college.

Discussion

The results of the study provide evidence that the program Group Counseling Plus was effective in increasing g.p.a.'s of junior college students.

The positive findings of this study are inconsistent with previous, generally negative studies of counseling to improve grades. (Cohn and Sniffen, 1962; Goodstein and Crites, 1961; and Nothman, 1964)

The question arises as to whether an extensive and intensive relationship, concern and availability of the counselor at crucial times are determining factors in group counseling as a method of increasing college success.

Description and Example of the Process

In one semester a student attended ten group counseling sessions, had four academic advisement sessions, and began twice a week individual counseling the last three weeks in the semester in an attempt to reverse a pattern of failing after obtaining academic success. (The student requested individual sessions after group discussion of the positive values of failure.) Two parental contacts were also made: one interview with the father, and a phone conversation with the mother.

Impulsive behavior related to intense fear of failure or competition may motivate a student to withdraw from classes or college, even though he knows he will automatically receive a failing grade. In this program the student's behavior would be discussed first since he had to speak with the counselor before making out a withdrawal form. At this time the counselor could suggest either referral back to the group, or individual sessions before the action was completed. Had this control not been placed on the student by someone who understood his mode of operating, he might not have been able to reverse this behavior pattern even though he had gained insight from the group sessions.

Because time is of prime importance in turning insight into action, one semester is an extremely short period to alter such problems as passive or active resistance to authority, long standing dependency relationships, fears of growing up, stress reactions of anxiety or depression, etc. These factors were felt to be important components of students' utilization of intellectual potential.

A recent negative study was presented on the outcome of group counseling with college students to improve g.p.a.'s. When the counselor was asked about his

contact with students outside the group he replied, "I told them my door was always open, but they never come in." One wonders how this apparent lack of relationship and identification affected the group sessions.

Possibly counseling with college students for the purpose of increasing grade point averages has tended to be unsuccessful because it has been too superficial for the complexity of the problem.

Possible Bias

Consideration should also be given to the possibility of bias in this study.

Two variables that may have influenced the positive outcome of this study are the high education level of the fathers of the students in group counseling and the high incidence of re-entering students in the groups.

The Mann-Whitney-U test used in comparing the years of college of fathers of the experimental and control groups yielded a significant difference at $< .01$ level. Further examination of the data with regard to the relationship between students obtaining at least a C average after being placed on probation and the education level of their fathers is as follows: Nineteen experimental subjects had fathers who had more years of college than their matched controls. In this group, seven experimental and four control subjects obtained a 2.0 or above g.p.a. There were seven control subjects who had fathers with more years of college than their experimental paired subjects. Of these, three of the control subjects and seven of the experimental subjects obtained a C average. (This is a reverse of what was expected.) Four of the matches had fathers with 0 years of college. Here three of the experimental and one of the control subjects obtained at least a 2.0 average.

In the experimental group there were eleven students who had re-entered college after being out a semester or more. There were four re-entering students in the control group. Of these, nine or 81% of the experimental re-entering students and one or 25% of the control subjects obtained a C average. (It should be stated that the low success rate of re-entering students was a factor in the college attempting personal counseling.)

Thus, a closer examination of the variables, years of college of fathers of students, and number of re-entering students do not indicate that they are directly related to students obtaining higher grade averages.

Summary

The results of this study indicate that students in the group counseling program obtained higher grade point averages than a matched control group who were not in a counseling program.

Conclusion

If one assumes that a close relationship and identification are required for early childhood learning, then it may follow that these factors are necessary for the altering of patterns of learning of college age students.

Possibly they need more than insight. Unsuccessful students may require a combination of insight PLUS much personal attention and solicitude.

TABLE I

Age Upon Entrance in College		
	$\bar{X}$	S D
Experimental	18.2	10.57
Control	18.2	9.57
Age Beginning of Semester Acquired Probation Grades		
	$\bar{X}$	S D
Experimental	18.4	11.54
Control	18.5	15.37

TABLE II

Total ACE Scores		
	$\bar{X}$	S D
Experimental	67.0	26.79
Control	67.4	26.35

TABLE III

	Experimental	Control	Total
Number of students who obtained 2.0 g.p.a. semester after being placed on probation.	17	8	25
Number of students who did not obtain a 2.0 g.p.a. semester after being placed on probation.	13	22	35
Total	30	30	60
X^2	5.36 (d.f. = 1)		
P	.05		

TABLE IV

Total ACE (Centile) of the Students in Group Counseling

Range	Male	Female	Combined	%	No. and % that obtained 20 g.p.a. in "after" semester	
90-10	5	5	10	33.3	7	41.1
80-90	2	1	3	10.	1	5.9
70-80	2	1	3	10.	1	5.9
60-70	3	0	3	10.	3	17.6
50-60	2	0	2	6.7	2	11.8
40-50	1	2	3	10.	1	5.9
30-40	1	1	2	6.7	1	5.9
20-30	0	2	2	6.7	1	5.9
10-20	2	0	2	6.7	0	0.
0-30	0	0	0	0.	0	0.
	18	12	30	100.	17	100.

The total ACE score is a combination of the quantitative and language scores.